



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
DIRECTOR'S OFFICE
4126 Technology Way, Suite 100
Carson City, Nevada 89706
Telephone (775) 684-4000 • Fax (775) 684-4010
<http://dhhs.nv.gov>

PRESS RELEASE

Wednesday, March 7, 2012

For Immediate Release

Contact: Mary Woods, PIO
(775) 684-4024

Mary.woods@dhhs.nv.gov

Innovative Partnership Expedites Access to Mental Healthcare in Rural Nevada

An equipment upgrade to existing telemedicine services allows rural communities rapid access to emergency psychiatric care. Known to participants as "SHAP," or State Health Access Project, the approach features enhanced telemedicine technology to deliver same-day emergency psychiatric evaluations from the University of Nevada School of Medicine psychiatrists to patients in rural clinics.

Before the upgrade, Nevada's Mental Health and Developmental Services (MHDS), Rural Services agency used closed-circuit, telemedicine equipment to communicate between psychiatrists and patients living in rural communities. The equipment often had problems with its signal transmissions which lead to poor picture quality, frozen images, mangled audio, and dropped calls. This often caused client appointments to be cancelled or rescheduled. The small computer screen also made it hard to clearly see the person at the other end. In addition, the previous system could only connect between computers at other MHDS Rural Services clinics, which limited access to psychiatric resources.

*Nevada Department of Health and Human Services
Helping People -- It's Who We Are And What We Do*

In contrast, SHAP's new equipment expands connectivity to include rural hospital emergency rooms (in addition to the MHDS Rural Services clinics) with dedicated psychiatrists at the University of Nevada School Of Medicine (UNSOM). A new scheduling agreement with the University ensures psychiatrists are available for emergency psychiatric needs.

The new SHAP equipment, purchased through the Health Division's State Health Access Project and Access to Healthcare Network, has a state-of-the-art, high-resolution screen and is a dedicated tele-video processing system. This vastly improves the psychiatrist's ability to observe the client and watch for subtle movement disorders which may indicate negative side-effects from medications or other influences.

SHAP is the result of a collaborative public-private partnership with MHDS Rural Services, Access to Healthcare Network, UNSOM, and the rural community hospitals. In addition to the new equipment, this partnership creates a single entry point into a rural system of care.

A second component to the SHAP project is an educational curriculum developed between UNSOM and MHDS Rural Services; which is now offered using the new equipment to healthcare professionals and provides continuing education credits for Primary Care providers in rural areas.

###